

Participant Structures as Professional Learning Tasks and the Development of Pedagogical Language Knowledge among Preservice Teachers

By Tomás Galguera

English-Language Learners (ELLs, English-Learners, ELs) are a particularly challenging sector of the student population in United States schools. They constitute an increasingly larger presence in most school districts, growing 51 percent in ten years to 5.1 million in 2006 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2007). Despite becoming more common, schools have yet to figure out ways to meet the needs of these students, who continue to lag behind in most academic achievement measures (Editorial Projects in Education, 2009). Although “English-Language-Learner” is an important demographic category, the designation is problematic as a reference point for teaching practice among teachers and teacher educators.

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In this article I argue for a shift in the definition of teaching practice for teachers and teacher educators away from “English learners” toward “language use for academic purposes” as a perspective from which to examine our practice. This self-study is an instance of a teacher educator interested in experiential, hands-on pedagogy to foster critical language awareness (Alim,

2005) among preservice teachers. As I discuss, this is an important element of Pedagogical Language Knowledge development, a variation in Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge construct. The research questions guiding my self-study are: What role does language as contextual variable play in preservice teachers' understanding of participant structures (Leunig, 2008; Philips, 2009) as Professional Learning Tasks (PLTs) (Ball & Cohen, 1999)? And how does this understanding relate to preservice teachers' emerging pedagogical content knowledge for language development?

I begin by proposing a re-conceptualization of teaching and teacher preparation in terms of learning outcomes, not student types. I argue that "English-Language-Learners" is (a) both too broad and not inclusive enough, (b) likely to elicit views of students as deficient, (c) not conducive to "one-size-fits-all" approaches (Reyes, 1992), and (d) lacking a widely-accepted theory or model to explain the relationship between teaching and learning. Thus, rather than preparing teachers for a particular type of student, we ought to prepare teachers capable of effecting specific learning outcomes, namely, furthering students' proficiency in using language for academic purposes. For this, I rely on a conceptual framework that takes into account the complexities of language development for academic purposes and that questions the nature of experiential approaches in preservice pedagogy. I then analyze my students' developing awareness of academic language after completing two PLTs, one in English, the other in Spanish. After discussing findings, I close with conclusions and recommendations regarding academic language use as another form of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

English-Language-Learners as a Defining Category

An examination of the socio-economic and immigration statuses, national origins, schooling backgrounds, academic expectations, and English proficiency levels of students classified as "English-Language Learners" reveals greater diversity than the homogeneity suggested by the label (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005). A thorough analysis of statistics associated with ELL students in California leads Edwards, Leichty, and Wilson (2008) to question the designation. In their words, "[o]ne key to understanding and addressing the challenge of effectively educating these students is to see beyond the English learner (EL) label to the diversity of students included in this subgroup" (p. 1). In California, where 50 percent of public school students live in households where a language other than English is spoken, and where the proportion of ELL students is the highest in the U.S. (25%), we find over 55 different languages in schools and most (53%) ELLs in Kindergarten. ELLs are heterogeneously distributed across California counties, with the largest school districts containing the highest percentages of ELL students (Edwards, Leichty, & Wilson, 2008).

Scholars have argued that the ELL designation elicits deficit views that ignore the students' wealth of experiences (Marx, 2002), social and cultural capital (Valdés,

1996), cultural background (Moll, 1992; Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001), and prior schooling (Callahan, 2005), among other variables. Furthermore, an emphasis on a lack of English proficiency can elicit deficit thinking among teachers (Valencia, 1997), but especially beginning teachers, who often view ELL students as lacking English proficiency, intellectual abilities, content knowledge, or even motivation and respect (Wade, Fauske, & Thompson, 2008, p. 431).

The education of ELL students is no longer the sole responsibility of a particular sector of teachers and administrators. As Delia Pompa, Vice President of Education for the National Council of La Raza, puts it, policy-makers no longer think of English learners “as those Title VII students separate and apart from everything else that took place in the federal legislation. [Now] ELLs are at the table. They are a part of all federal legislation” (As quoted in Educational Testing Services, 2008, p. 2). Nevertheless, concern for language development for academic purposes ought not be limited to teachers of language minority students. In his analysis of the Ebonics controversy in Oakland, Baugh (2004) stresses the need to develop the proficiency of African American students in Standard English. Rickford (1999), Rickford (2001), and Alim (2005) reach similar conclusions regarding the need to provide speakers of African American Vernacular English with opportunities to gain proficiency in Academic English. In direct contrast to deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997), these scholars recommend using the students’ own vernacular as a resource for academic English development. This argument shares much in common with bilingual education principles, despite legal and popular opposition to equate the two initiatives (Rickford, 2005).

U.S. public schools have relied on a number of approaches and programs to educate ELLs, from bilingual education, in which students are taught academic content in their native language while they also learn English, to English-only instruction. Consistent and reliable research findings point to the superiority of bilingual education over all-English instruction (August & Hakuta, 1997; Hakuta, 1986; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2003; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Yet, the picture is less clear when one considers how skills learned in one language transfer to another, for instance, as it relates to higher order literacy skills such as comprehension, summarizing, and self-assessment. Evidence suggests that transfer across languages is in fact a set of metalinguistic and metacognitive strategies that students exhibit in both first and second languages (Genesee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2006, p. 161). Societal, cultural, organizational, and political factors (Crawford, 2004; Hakuta, 1986) as well as issues related to numbers of speakers of the language in question and teacher preparation and curricular materials (Brisk, 2006) make implementation and evaluation of bilingual programs difficult. For teacher educators, the certification of bilingual teachers involves its own set of procedures and regulations, which are beyond the scope of this article.

Outside of bilingual instruction, English-language development (ELD) programs typically involve instruction in English that has been modified to enhance student

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comprehension and maximize their opportunities to speak and write in academic English. ELD examples include sheltered instruction, content-ESL, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) (Sobul, 1995), and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Guarino et al., 2001). Each of these approaches bases curricular and pedagogical choices on different theories, models, or assumptions about second language acquisition (SLA). For foreign language instruction, methods such as grammar translation, audiolingual, communicative, and the natural approach are also informed by variations of second language development theories that were sometimes in opposition to each other and often lack empirical backing (Valdés, 2001).

In proposing a framework for language and literacy development, and echoing Bartolomé's (1994) enduring caution against a "methods fetish," Margaret Hawkins (2004) reminds us to "rid ourselves of the assumption that good teaching results in language learning and academic success. It is simply not true that we can find the right method, and the right approach, to 'fix' ELLs" (p. 21). The complexity and context-dependent nature of SLA and the multidisciplinary composition of the field (Valdés, 2004; Ortega, 2006) resist the creation of a grand-unified theory, despite considerable advances in linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive science, and research in education. Jordan (2004) argues that a SLA theory ought to address the nature of competence, the process by which competence is acquired, and ways in which one puts competence to use (p. 260). August and Hakuta (1997) describe SLA as

... a complex process requiring a diverse set of explanatory factors. Developing an inclusive theory of how a second language is acquired therefore necessitates moving beyond the description of plausible acquisition mechanisms for specific domains to an explanation of how those mechanisms work together to produce the integrated knowledge of a language that enables its use for communication. (p. 35)

It should not be surprising then that teachers and teacher educators often assume eclectic positions in planning and implementing approaches, methods, and teaching practices that are influenced by their own experiences as students and language users and by policies, guidelines, expectations, and norms in practice where they teach (Valdés, 2001).

August and Hakuta (1997) also note that the key issue in evaluating programs is not finding one that works best for all schools and students. Instead, they propose "finding a set of program components that works for the children in the community of interest, given the goals, demographics, and resources of that community" (p. 147). Programs and teaching practices for ELLs must reflect their backgrounds and experiences as well as social and educational contexts (Kumaravadevelu, 2006), a conclusion that further questions the usefulness of English Learners as a defining term for teachers and teacher educators.

Language for Academic Purposes

Conceptually, the idea of improving students' ability to use "academic English" is logical, especially when one considers that, contrary to popular beliefs, immigrant groups are ceasing to speak their native languages and shifting into English faster than ever before (Fishman, 1991; Veltman, 1983). However, fluency in vernacular English does not guarantee academic success; regardless of national origin, students must become proficient in using language for academic purposes. The challenge for teachers is to help students learn to recognize some of the features of academic English, but even more importantly, the academic functions that depend on language use (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Cummins (2008) provided teachers with a useful distinction between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" (BICS) and "cognitive academic language proficiency" (CALP). Though Cummins's work has been influential to bilingual and English-as-a-second-language teachers, researchers have been critical of Cummins's constructs (e.g., MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006). Cummins has since modified his description of BICS and CALP as a "specific conceptual distinction that has important implications for policy and practice" (p. 79), but he has not addressed the criticisms in any substantive way. The controversy is indicative of the challenges involved in defining a language variety that constantly changes and that is multifaceted and dependent on context.

Valdés (2004) sees the reasons for a lack of an accepted definition of academic English as "unconnected conversations that often fail to be heard by scholars who are members of other closely related professions" (p. 11). English teachers, college teachers of English as a second or other language (TESOL), K-12 teachers of English as a second language (ESL), and bilingual teachers (mostly K-5) rely on different understandings of academic discourse or academic English. The challenges associated with distinguishing between academic and non-academic forms are complicated by the dynamic and fluid nature of language. Thus, no obvious boundary exists between academic and non-academic forms, especially when one considers spoken and written modes and the multiple overlaps between these in a classroom context. Dichotomous conceptions of "academic" and "non-academic" or "conversational" language do not reflect the wide range of language used by humans, even within the limited interaction norms of most classrooms. In most classrooms, it is expected and actually desirable (Barnes, 1992) for students to use vernacular varieties or even their native language while collaborating in small groups in preparation for a written assignment or presentation that follows strict grammatical conventions. As Bunch (2006, p. 299) appropriately concludes, "In order to promote both language learning and access to subject area content, therefore, continuing efforts are needed to envision classrooms in which students can be *included in*, rather than *excluded from*, [author's emphasis] opportunities to participate in as wide a range of English for academic purposes as possible."

The challenges facing teacher educators in preparing teachers with attention

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to language development for academic purposes are complex. On the one hand, thinking about teaching practice exclusively for ELL students is an approach that is both too broad and not sufficiently inclusive as well as possibly elicit deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997), among teachers and administrators. On the other hand, no single approach or method has been proven effective in developing students' proficiency in all oral and written manifestations of academic language, nor is there a unifying, proven theory of second language acquisition. We can, however, help teachers conceive a set of learning goals and objectives as well as related curricula and pedagogy intended to apprentice students into the academic discourse community. Rather than ensuring that preservice teachers are able to distinguish between academic and non-academic varieties in order to teach the former, I propose that we concentrate our efforts in preparing teachers to consider the functions language plays in an academic setting.¹

The conceptual framework I propose to guide research and teaching practice out of this conundrum assumes a relation between experiential pedagogy and critical language awareness in teachers toward a functional view of academic language. The ultimate goal is for all students to use language to describe complexity, higher-order thinking, abstractions, as well as using figurative expressions, being explicit for distant audiences, using evidence for support that is nuanced, qualified, and objective (Zwiers, 2008.) The assumption I test in this self-study is that, by providing preservice teachers with opportunities to examine specific functions of language in academic contexts and experience ways in which language is used to represent knowledge in classrooms as well as the power and status differences encoded in language, they begin to construct deep understandings of language as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

Experiential Pedagogy, Awareness, and Teacher Knowledge

Researchers have failed to find convincing evidence that theories teachers learn in preservice programs influence their practice, yet this remains the predominant model (Tigheelaar & Korthagen, 2004). Most teacher educators are familiar with and sensitive to complaints about excessive emphasis on theory and not sufficient practical content in preservice or inservice courses. Beginning teachers, by nature, struggle with the multifaceted challenges of teaching and learning to teach in urban schools with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Whereas beginning teachers have vast school-related experiences in their native language to inform their novice actions (Lortie, 1975), most only have limited experiences as foreign-language, not second-language learners.² This requires teacher educators to provide beginning teachers with experiences upon which to build their emerging practice by developing pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) for language development, or "Pedagogical Language Knowledge."

It has been more than ten years since Loughran (1997) accurately concluded

that teacher educators lacked a shared understanding of pedagogy for preservice teacher preparation. Since then, several books and articles have contributed to an emerging field (e.g., Danielewicz, 2001; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, & Lagerwerf, 2001; Loughran, 2006; Russell, & Loughran, 2007). This self-study is an effort to enhance the understanding of teacher preparation pedagogy for language development. Hence, I examine the pedagogical implications of a practice that is quite common in both preservice and inservice contexts. I am interested in studying participant structures as a particular hands-on activity.

Ball and Cohen (1999) proposed using “professional learning tasks” (PLTs) as integral elements in preservice and inservice programs. A PLT is a series of activities in which the “curriculum” is grounded “in the tasks, questions, and problems of practice” (p. 20) and fosters “the development of a disposition of inquiry” (p. 27). I also see PLTs as one of a possible set of what Lee Shulman calls “signature pedagogies” in teacher education. The question that Shulman poses to teacher educators is “[...] how do we take the best practices that we now employ in teacher education and more deeply understand what makes them wise and what makes them flawed?” (As quoted in Falk, 2006, p. 76).

Korthagen and Kessels (1999) utilize the term “Gestalt” to describe the multiple subconscious sources of teacher behavior that define most teaching situations. Much of this teacher behavior has an almost reflex-like quality. Because of urgent and immediate demands on teachers’ attention and time, most actions by them are automatic. However, teachers also rely on practical rules-of-thumb or logical conclusions and formal theories to guide their teaching, what Korthagen and Kessels call “schemas.”

Tigcheelar and Korthagen (2004) see a difference between novice and experienced teachers in the extent to which they are aware of and examine their Gestalts. After multiple similar situations requiring immediate reaction (and under favorable circumstances), experienced teachers are able to examine their actions. This “reflection on action” (Schön, 1983), though dependent largely on each teacher’s disposition toward and capacity for reflection, requires a critical level of experiences in order for reactions to repeat themselves and, eventually, become routines. Tigcheelar and Korthagen recognize that these emergent routines constitute new Gestalts associated with particular contexts and that may, in turn, become the foundations for yet new Gestalts. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) see an interaction and alignment between Gestalts, schemas, and theories as an important element of the development of teacher knowledge and practice. They advocate for a “realistic approach” to teacher education that requires students to examine their Gestalts, schemas, and theories (in that order) producing an alignment across all three levels of teacher knowledge and behavior (p. 10).

Tigcheelar and Korthagen (2004) utilized three approaches to help preservice teachers link theory and practice: (a) unearthing previous Gestalts, (b) working with recent experiences and recently formed Gestalts, and (c) creating new experi-

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ences. The latter includes modeling and reflection in action as well as examination of exemplary practice. These approaches embody four principles of realistic teacher education that set them apart from more traditional theory-to-practice approaches:

- (1) [W]orking with student teachers' own specific and actual experiences and their (immediate) behaviours, (2) the promotion of reflection on these experiences and behaviours, (3) co-operation between student teachers, and (4) taking existing Gestalts of student teachers seriously, as the basis for their further professional growth. (p. 677)

Participant structures as PLTs can be used to create new experiences (approach c), particularly when teacher educators model desirable teacher behaviors and pedagogies as appropriate. Furthermore, it is possible to follow all four principles of realistic teacher education while utilizing PLTs, if we provide opportunities for student teachers to reflect on and, collaboratively, integrate their immediate experiences and teaching behaviors with course materials as well as building upon these Gestalts.

When modeling specific behaviors and pedagogies or curricula for students as the central component of a PLT, teacher educators must recognize a performance dimension in this situation both for instructors and students. When teachers are guided through the steps in activities originally intended for K-12 students and complete the work as described on the directions, they are being asked to assume the role of students. Conversely, the teacher educator or presenter assumes the role of a teacher, emphasizing specific behaviors or ways to present content and manage students' behavior. Depending on the nature of the activity and the teacher educator or professional developer's preferences, the role-play component in the PLTs can be made more or less explicit. For instance, when introducing reading process awareness exercises associated with a cognitive apprenticeship model of reading instruction (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 2000), professional developers and instructors explicitly ask participants to remain aware of what they do as they read the text selection they are reading. The discussion that follows relies on the reported experiences of the participants as jumping-off points and as illustrations of important ideas behind teaching reading as cognitive apprenticeship.

When preparing teachers for language development, one encounters yet another challenge: the natural tendency in humans to focus their attention on meaning, not the form and surface features of language. Our use of language beyond the creation and understanding of meaning is modular (Fodor, 1983). The myriad processes associated with comprehending and producing language follow deep structures, posing relatively minor cognitive demand, and allowing us to focus our attention on meaning. Yet critical language awareness is essential for teachers of language (Fairclough, 1995; Ferguson, 2002; Trappes-Lomax & Ferguson, 2002; Van Lier, 1995), who must not only have a deep understanding of it as a subject to be taught but also recognize the social and political ramifications associated with its use. In designing curriculum and pedagogy of teacher preparation and professional de-

velopment for language development, we must rely on approaches that emphasize awareness of teacher knowledge and its relationship to teaching behaviors as well as language use for academic purposes in all its forms.

My goal as a teacher educator is to surface preservice teachers' Gestalts toward teaching for language development by engaging them in a PLT, purposefully generate new Gestalts and, through analysis, reflection, and discussion, create new experiences (Tigcheelar and Korthagen, 2004) that in turn become the basis for Pedagogical Language Knowledge.

Context and Methods

This self-study emerges after several years of teaching English Language Development (ELD) methods courses for multiple and single subjects preservice teachers at a liberal arts college. My work represents an attempt to understand my students' awareness of their emerging knowledge about teaching for language development for academic purposes and improve my effectiveness in preparing them to teach. I aim to apply and evaluate my insights about teaching and learning (Loughran, 2006). I am motivated by a desire to improve my capacity to prepare teachers in a collaborative setting, utilizing a pragmatic methodological research approach (LaBoskey, 2004).

Because of demonstrated connections between oral proficiency and reading comprehension (Lesaux & Geva, 2006), I make extensive use of participant structures (Leunig, 2008; Philips, 2001) as PLTs in my courses. In schools, participant structures are explicit, planned interactions that scaffold students' comprehension and production primarily of oral language in accordance to academic discourse norms. Examples include pair-share, Round-Robin, and jigsaws. My motivation also stems from my concern for developing a pedagogy of teacher education by distinguishing between "school teaching and teaching about teaching" (Loughran, 2006, p. 14). In my courses, I introduce each participant structure as examples of one or more scaffolds for language development (Walqui, 2006) and as opportunities for us to examine and discuss curriculum and pedagogy for language development. Explicitly, I ask my students to imagine themselves as students while completing the tasks associated with each participant structure, noticing their feelings and thoughts while also examining the experience from a teacher's perspective.

After each participant structure, I usually ask preservice teachers to write a structured reflection on a printed form in which first they summarize the tasks and activities involved and then record insights and concerns from a student's and a teacher's perspective. They also comment on the likelihood of utilizing the participant structure (or a modified version) at their current field placements and during their first year as teachers. Besides being one data source for this self-study, my students' written responses function as a scaffold for whole-group discussions to debrief the tasks and activities associated with each structure and as notes for them

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for future reference. (I hand back the forms after photocopying them; they do not count toward a grade.) For this research, I focused on two participant structures: an Extended Anticipation Guide (EAG) and an Oral Language Development Jigsaw (OLDJ). The former included a reading selection in Spanish, whereas the latter was entirely in English.

I began the EAG by announcing to students that we were to engage in a discussion about the H1N1 cases that had been on the news as a way to demonstrate contextualization as a scaffold for language development (Walqui, 2006). After summarizing my students' contributions using an overhead projector and introducing key related vocabulary in Spanish, I gave them a handout with five statements about H1N1 (e.g., "Researchers are quite familiar with the nature and structure of the H1N1 virus.") and asked them to mark whether they agreed or disagreed with each. After marking their choices individually, my students shared responses in pairs and, if necessary, revised them. Next, I told them that they were to keep the statements and their responses in mind while reading a newspaper article and find confirming or disconfirming evidence. They were then to write quotes in support of their responses in the space provided. They did all this individually, but then shared their completed forms in small groups. The directions for the various tasks and the statements were in English, but the newspaper article was in Spanish.

Learning outcomes for EAGs include (1) developing metacognitive awareness for reading comprehension, (2) utilizing strategies for reading with a purpose, (3) note-taking skills, and (4) quoting pertinent passages. However, the reasons for including this participant structure as a PLT in my course are to demonstrate the power of schema-building and metacognitive development as language-development scaffolds (Walqui, 2006). This participant structure also demonstrates one approach to teach using language to describe complexity, engage in higher-order thinking, and using evidence for support that is nuanced, qualified, and objective (Zwiers, 2008). I also aimed to develop awareness for reading process in a second language and foster empathy toward language minority students. It is for these reasons that I asked my students to read a newspaper article in Spanish. For this PLT only, I also asked students to self-assess their Spanish proficiency on a four-point Likert scale (high, moderate, minimal, none).

The OLDJ consisted of sets of five, somewhat ambiguous illustrations depicting characters and settings in a style resembling Pre-Columbian codices. In groups of four, students studied the illustrations and practiced describing them together. The directions stressed that students were to describe what they saw, not speculate about what the images depicted. I highlighted this requirement and provided examples of descriptive and speculative language. Leaving the illustrations behind, students then re-assembled into pre-designated groups of five (one student per illustration) and, in Round-Robin, proceeded to describe their respective illustrations. They did this without notes, but following a format I taught them in which they were to consider general features first and then details. Finally, each small group created a

story that fit the illustrations (in whichever order), which they then told to the rest of the class.

The explicit learning outcomes of this participant structure in an elementary or secondary classroom is to provide students with opportunities to (1) describe illustrations from general to specific features, (2) utilize descriptive vocabulary, and (3) compose stories that contain a title, setting, characters, plot, and resolution. In turn, my goal in utilizing this participant structure as a PLT was to provide students with an example of listening and speaking skills development with attention to description and narration. The academic language functions that this participant structure demonstrates include describing complexity, engaging in higher-order thinking, using figurative expressions, and being explicit for distant audiences (Zwiers, 2008.) The OLDJ also exemplifies curriculum and pedagogy that promote development of language for academic purposes at the discourse level.

In all, I collected 76 written reflections from students in both courses. (Two students were absent; one for each PLT.) In addition, I conducted follow-up, semi-structured interviews with six students, three from each course, following purposive sampling guidelines (Silverman, 2010) for both PLT and student's native language. The need for follow-up interviews became apparent especially after sharing code note memoranda with my critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993), who stressed the importance of additional explanatory evidence. To minimize bias, I conducted the interviews after the course had ended and grades were posted. My data analyses were inductive and deductive and followed grounded theory principles and methods (Glaser, 1998).

Findings and Discussion

Thirty-nine students allowed me to use their written reflections as data (three declined). The 20 multiple and 19 single-subject students who participated in my self-study are representative of past year's groups. They were predominantly White (67%), female (87%), and overwhelmingly native-English-speaking (92%). Regardless of native language, two students self-assessed their Spanish proficiency as high, four as moderate, six as minimal, and 17 as none. (One native-Spanish-speaker rated his proficiency as "high;" two as "intermediate.")

In their written comments and interviews, my students were generally appreciative of both participant structures, especially the OLDJ. My students were less enthusiastic toward the EAG, and several mentioned experiencing anxiety about feeling "insecure; able to understand parts, but [also] uncomfortable about making assumptions" because of their limited ability to read the article in Spanish. Nevertheless, only four students stated that they would not use EAGs at their concurrent field placements or as credentialed teachers after leaving the program. Of these, two cited their plans to teach Kindergarten and their future students' developing reading skills as the reason for their skepticism.

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All six preservice teachers I interviewed spoke positively toward my use of participant structures as points of departure for discussions of pertinent practical and theoretical aspects of language development and teaching. They said that engaging in tasks that required them to listen, speak, read, and write in particular ways made the assigned readings and discussions more memorable and contextualized than listening to me lecture or discussing assigned readings. Amy,³ a multiple subjects preservice teacher spoke about her experience in reference to a participant structure we had used previously: “I still remember when we did the collaborative poster on Krashen’s hypotheses, and how the Gibbons chapter on going from conversation to writing made more sense. First I didn’t get why we couldn’t trade markers.” Amy’s confusion about one of the requirements for a previous participant structure (Collaborative Posters) highlights one of the most important reasons for me to adopt an experiential approach for my teaching: opportunities to discuss with students Gestalts and emerging schemas in teaching for language development as well as relevant theories toward integrated new experiences (Tigcheelar & Korthagen, 2004). This is particularly necessary when developing awareness toward ways in which we use language, something our minds did not evolve to do.

My students mentioned having to read in Spanish as the most salient task in the EAG. The feelings they described in their written reflections from a student’s perspective included “stressed,” “anxious,” “worried,” and “struggle.” Still, a majority (54%) wrote about feeling both challenged and surprised about how much they were able to do, despite their limited proficiency in Spanish. The following statements illustrate my students’ reactions: “more fun than just reading—like a puzzle,” (single-subject, moderate-Spanish proficiency) “it was hard to do because of Spanish, but knowing what I was looking for helped a lot” (multiple-subjects, minimal-Spanish proficiency). Eight of seventeen preservice teachers who self-assessed their Spanish proficiency as “none” expressed only negative reactions toward the exercise. The following is an example: “It was hard because I felt nervous getting answers wrong. When I did get the article, it was hard to be sure about my opinions because I am not a Spanish speaker. I didn’t feel very successful.”

Only one preservice teacher’s comments from a teacher’s perspective were not positive—he was critical of the directions on the handout. All others mentioned either issues they would consider for successful implementation of EAGs or reasons for using them or both. “Get students talking to each other. Activates prior knowledge. Gives a focus (why, how, what) to reading... students have something to look for in the text” is an example of a comment, which was written by a native-English-speaker (Spanish self-assessment: “minimal”).

In follow-up interviews, all students remembered their reactions when I asked them to read the newspaper article in Spanish after discussing with the entire group (in English) what they knew about a current news story: the H1N1 outbreak. Their memories of the specific procedure we followed were hazy, but they all recalled with ease their anxieties and worries, or in one case, the satisfaction and pride, when I

told them to find evidence either supporting or contradicting the statements on the handout. Pedro, the multiple-subjects, native-Spanish-speaker who rated his Spanish proficiency as high, recalled: “It was great! Finally, I knew everything I was reading without thinking hard. I could read every word, and the work was easy! I was done right away, so then I helped other people in my group. Me acuerdo que había leído un artículo de lo mismo un día antes. [I remember having read an article on the same topic the day before.]” They all remembered the reason for the exercise, and four said they had used variations of the EAG. The other two students I interviewed said their field placements did not lend themselves to this participant structure, but they thought they would consider them when they had their own classrooms.

When I asked what lesson about teaching for language development remained with them after more than a month after completing the EAG in my course, all six mentioned teaching reading as an aspect of language development. “Scaffolding” or “scaffold” was a term they all used to describe various aspects of the participant structure. Three referred to “context” and five to “background knowledge” as relevant constructs, but all alluded to the importance of pre-reading tasks when teaching reading for academic purposes. One student, John, a single-subject, “moderate” Spanish-speaker informed me that he had used a modified version of the EAG by asking his students to write one of the five statements to mark as either “agree” or “disagree.” In my view, John understood the importance of the EAG as a pre-reading exercise to activate relevant background knowledge and to scaffold reading comprehension by providing students with a strategy to read with a purpose, even when are not able to understand every written word.

Overall, my students’ responses to the OLDJ were more favorable than to the EAG. Their reflections from a student’s perspective described predominantly their feelings, the illustrations they described, and the stories they created. Eighty-five percent of the comments were positive and often included words such as “fun,” “exciting,” “creative,” “inclusive,” or “enjoyable.” A single-subject, native-Spanish-speaker’s reflection is representative of both groups: “This is fun! Students can have a lot of fun trying to describe the picture they got and then coming up with an idea.” Among the themes emerging from the reflections from a student’s perspective was a concern for students’ personalities and certain task requirements, such as shyness and the need to participate in telling the story to the class. Another theme was frustration with restrictions for describing the illustrations during the Round-Robin phase. A third theme was the opportunities to be creative and engage in story telling.

My students’ reflections from a teacher’s perspective mentioned predominantly logistics and practical concerns. Most listed the descriptive requirements of the initial phase in the jigsaw, structured collaboration that required students to listen and speak, its open-ended, creative nature, and the potential for language development in the task. “Fun activity that encourages descriptive language (adjectives), attention to detail, collaboration, story-telling, and presentation skills” is how a

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multiple-subjects, native-English-speaking student wrote about her evaluation of the participant structure from a teacher's perspective.

Both sets of data contain evidence of preservice teachers generally making connections with theories or constructs we had discussed in my course and other courses in the program. Only fourteen (18%) and ten (13%) reflections for the OLDJ and EAG (respectively) contained no reference to specific constructs or theories, describing only feelings and entirely practical concerns. Despite being explicit at the onset about my goals of demonstrating an authentic and engaging approach for fostering oral language development with attention to description and narration, and beginning the class period with a review of a chapter by Gibbons (2005) on the progression from speaking to writing (multiple subjects) and a chapter by Ur (1981) on linguistic and practical aspects of classroom discussions (single subjects), these comments focused on the engaging nature of the experience and, when addressing teaching-related concerns, they did so generally. The following comment by a single-subject student is representative: "Many opportunities for language and describing. Using memory recall and language together to explain. Uses listening and speaking skills."

An analysis of my students' responses to the question of whether they might use an OLDJ either at their current placement or future classrooms revealed only one skeptical comment from a native-English-speaker (Spanish self-assessment: "none"). This student expressed concern about not knowing which standard the participant structure addressed for her field placement (grade 3) and, as she put it regarding her future classroom, "In Kindergarten?! Probably not!" All other students, however, were quite certain (39%) that they could use an OLDJ at their field placements or at least imagined this being possible (60%), especially if they adapted the tasks to suit their particular contexts. Furthermore, two multiple-subjects preservice teachers borrowed sets of materials to use in their field placements, with mixed results. One was Pedro, a native-Spanish-speaker (self-assessment: "high") who was among those I interviewed subsequently.

During the follow-up interviews, all of my students' statements were positive when speaking about the OLDJ and three were quite enthusiastic: "Oh, I remember that! It was one of the most fun classes of the semester! It was great listening to everyone tell crazy stories. Remember when [student's name] added sound effects to their story, and other people started acting, and stuff?" This is how Julie, a multiple-subjects, native-English-speaker (Spanish self-assessment: "minimal") preservice teacher spoke about this participant structure.

In response to my question of why they thought I had asked them to do this in class, they all referred to speaking and listening skills and story-telling in particular. Two preservice teachers spoke the challenges in distinguishing between description and speculation (the directions on the handout required students to do the former, not the latter). Pedro described what happened when he taught an OLDJ as part of a unit on Pre-Columbian Civilizations in a grade 5 class, with mostly Latino students:

Pedro: It didn't go very good. [Master teacher] used groups, but we hadn't done a jigsaw, at least not a full one like we did in class. So the kids looked at the pictures and, instead of describing them, began to come up with funny scenarios. Like, 'Mira, parece que este vato va a besar una calaca!' [Look, it looks like this dude is going to kiss a skull!]

TG: Had you taught them the difference between description and speculation?

Pedro: Yeah, [master teacher] and I went over it before they started, but it's really hard to just describe something, you know? So then we just let them get into the other groups and make up the stories. They were getting frustrated.

TG: How did that go?

Pedro: Not everyone did it. Like one or two kids in most groups wrote down the story and told the rest what they were going to do. You know how some kids always take control?

TG: Did you require them to report in Round-Robin?

Pedro: Yeah, but then they just started talking. Like the kids that took over also talked the most.

TG: So what did you learned from this experience?

Pedro: That you have to teach the kids how to do jigsaws first. And maybe break the jigsaw into parts, over several days, instead of all at once, especially if this is the first time you do it. Also teach them to use descriptive language. I remember that was hard for us in your class, so I don't know; I should've remembered that and made sure they knew how before doing the jigsaw. But it had to be that day because [master teacher] was going to start another unit right away.

TG: I know; it's tough trying to do your own teaching when there is already a plan in place. What about language development? What did you learn?

Pedro: Hmmm... I guess that you have to scaffold things, especially for kids who usually don't participate. Maybe you have to get the kids who talk a lot and take over to be quiet, so that the quiet ones can talk too.

TG: Remind me, what was your learning goal?

Pedro: I guess I wanted them to review what they had learned about the Aztecs and come up with stories that had characters and a plot and that were based on things we know about the Aztecs, like their gods, what they did, what they built.

As can be seen from this excerpt, practical and logistical aspects related to pedagogy were predominant in Pedro's comments about his experience using an OLDJ in his own classroom. His reflection on this experience remained limited to pedagogy in general and, when asked, his thoughts about language development focused on student interaction styles and technical questions about ways to ensure equal participation among group members, but were not included in his learning goals. Pedro mentions "scaffolds," a formal theoretical construct. However, "scaf-

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fold” is so commonly used among faculty and preservice teachers in the program that it has become a common piece of professional jargon.

A comparison of each preservice teacher’s reflections for both PLTs (i.e. within-subjects analysis) reveals a complicated picture (see Table 1). From a student’s perspective, a majority of the reflections were comparable in length and depth for either TLP, though the proportion of preservice teachers who wrote longer and more complex statements after completing the EAG was greater than for the OLDJ. An analysis of these responses by course (i.e., single or multiple-subjects) reveals almost equal proportions of each group for all three categories (i.e., OLDJ-predominant, equivalent, EAG-dominant).

Assuming a teacher’s perspective, the proportion of preservice teachers who wrote longer and more complex statements for either TLP was almost equal, but a minority wrote reflections that were equivalent for both TLPs. A subsequent analysis of comments by course reveals a clear difference: Ninety percent of the longer and more complex reflections for the EAG came from single subjects preservice teachers, whereas both groups are almost equally represented among those for the OLDJ. Finally, an analysis of the preservice teachers’ statements guesses toward the likelihood of utilizing either TLP in their current or in future teaching placements makes it clear that they believed it would be easier to try the OLDJ. I detected no difference between responses from either the multiple or single-subject groups. Single-subject students had also been introduced to anticipation guides in a reading methods course.

Findings from a within-subjects analysis reveal the power of the EAG to elicit empathy among preservice teachers toward the experience of most English-Learners in numerous classrooms. The EAG exemplifies TLPs that help me surface my student’s previous and recent Gestalts and experiences regarding language use for academic purposes as well as create new experiences by experiencing examples of language development pedagogy (Tigcheelar & Korthagen, 2004). This is also possible with the OLDJ as evidenced by the majority of reflections that were equivalent for both TLPs, but requiring preservice teachers to read a newspaper in Spanish clearly seems more effective in eliciting empathy toward English-Language Learners.

Table 1
Distribution of Longer and Deeper Reflections by PLT
and Prompt for Each Preservice Teacher (Within-Subject Analysis)

<i>Reflection prompt</i>	<i>OLDJ- predominant</i>	<i>Equivalent</i>	<i>EAG-predominant</i>
Student’s perspective	5	18	14
Teacher’s perspective	14	8	15
Future use	17	14	6

Note: The total responses (37) reflect the absence of two preservice teachers, one per PLT.

There also seems to be a difference in the perceived appropriateness of each participant structure by student teachers' language background and by course and grade level. The EAG was more effective in unearthing old Gestalts (Tichgelaar & Korthagen, 2004) as well as creating new ones, which we discussed in class. Interview data show that these Gestalts and experiences extended beyond the duration of the course. There were also differences between preservice teachers of different language backgrounds, with native-Spanish-speakers enjoying the opportunity to exploit their language proficiency instead of feeling anxious. Differences between preservice teacher's comments as teachers and their expectations for future use of each participant structure point to the importance of appropriateness and relevance in choosing PLTs, particularly as examples of teaching practice. Though the EAG was equally effective with both groups as an exercise in empathy and reading-process awareness (Braunger & Lewis, 2006), there were differences in how preservice teachers view each participant structure as appropriate or useful for their own teaching practice. These differences were confirmed by Pedro and a classmate, both in multiple-subjects classrooms, borrowing sets of materials to use at their respective field placements.

Conclusion

Lee Shulman (1987) coined the term "pedagogical content knowledge" to describe teacher knowledge "at the intersection between content and pedagogy" (p. 15). I propose that we build upon this construct and, rather than preparing teachers to teach English-Language Learners, we focus our efforts to develop the Pedagogical Language Knowledge of teachers. I am not alone in advocating for language awareness in general (Hawkins, 1999; Renou, 2001) and critical language awareness in particular (Alim, 2005; Fairclough, 1995; van Lier, 1995) as a crucial component in preparing teachers for language development. I hope that this self-study demonstrates the potential of participant structures as PLTs among preservice teachers, particularly as the means to develop critical language awareness and access past and current Gestalts (Tichgelaar & Korthagen, 2004) associated with language learning experiences. Professional Learning Tasks (Ball & Cohen, 1999) by themselves offer one possible approach for teachers to examine teaching practice and learn from it, but I also hope that this self-study will prompt consideration of relevant background and contextual variables that influence beginning teachers' understanding and use of scaffolds for language development (Walqui, 2006). Specifically, strategic use of languages other than English in participant structures (Philips, 2009; Leunig, 2008) plays a crucial role in eliciting relevant Gestalts and creating memorable experiences for preservice teachers. These experiences are likely to vary depending on the teachers' linguistic background, teaching experiences, context, and teaching interests.

I began this self-study motivated by a desire to improve my practice, and the

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findings from my research suggest clear directions for future changes in both courses and, likely, my practice writ large. Although what I learned from my research addressed the questions that guided my inquiry, others emerged. One question is how to foster clear and explicit links between theory and practice among preservice teachers. Tichelaar and Korthagen's (2004) "realistic approach" provided me with a framework that indeed helped preservice teachers in my courses find connections between practice and abstract models of teaching and learning. Still, most of these abstractions were informal theories and contained few clear references to formal theories. Thus, I intend to be more explicit in my instructions and require that preservice teachers collaboratively analyze their experiences completing PLTs in relation to postulates from relevant theories I will provide.

A second question that emerges from my findings has to do with preservice teachers utilizing the participant structures we analyze in my courses in their own teaching and utilizing what they learn from this as a source for Gestalts, schemas and theories (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Building on my analysis of preservice teachers such as Pedro, I aim to be purposeful and require future students in my courses to choose one participant structure to adapt and teach at their field placements, documenting and analyzing their experience in a collaborative context.

Clearly, the small sample size in this self-study limits the generalizability of my findings. Rather than procedures for other teacher educators to replicate, I hope my work will contribute to the discussion about pedagogy of teacher education pertaining to language development. Especially given the increasing linguistic diversity of the student population and the central role that language plays in teaching and learning, it behooves teacher educators at all levels and in all contexts to consider how best to prepare teachers to teach all students to successfully use language for academic purposes.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to Aída Walqui (personal communication) for this seemingly subtle, yet important insight.

² Foreign language courses are associated with "high culture" and are considered a choice for students. Second language courses aim to develop functional competence in a language of an adopted country or community and are often required (Fishman, 2001, p. 186).

³ All names are pseudonyms.

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